Nothing like reviewing your own book

SPEAKING VOLUMES

Long arms of the Krupps

In a sense, my new book, *The Arms of Krupp*, which Little, Brown will publish in the fall, has been 35 years in the making. Though I wasn't precocious in any other way, I *was* politically aware when the Nazis came to power, and as soon as I could understand German I began monitoring shortwave broadcasts. I was convinced then that the only way to stop Hitler was to kill him.

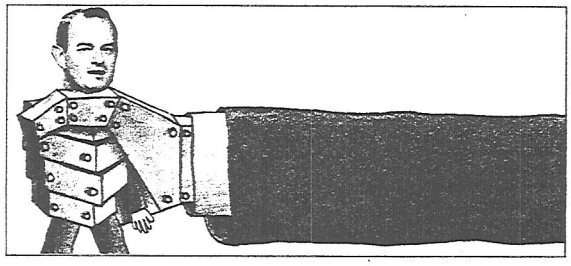
That, by the way, is precisely how Alfried Krupp put it to me one evening in the 300-room Krupp castle on the Ruhr. We were talking over candlelight about his sponsorship of the S.S. in 1931; and Alfried said, "The only way to stop us *would* have been to kill us."

Because Marines had been the first Americans to fight in France in World War I, I joined the Marine Corps after Pearl Harbor and, to my chagrin, found myself on a disagreeable island called Guadalcanal. But after the war I read everything I could find about German history, and when Harry Sions of *Holiday* suggested seven years ago that I write about the Krupps, I was ready to go.

By then I had dealt variously with hard-core Communists, Asian revolutionaries, agents of Arab intrigue and professional extremists in this country. It was useful experience, and I needed it. No other group I've ever encountered can touch those members of the German ruling classes who played key roles in the Third Reich — many of whom retain positions of power in Europe today.

My very first day in Essen was instructive. I went to a camera shop. I wanted to take documentary pictures. After the dealer had displayed several models, I brought up the subject of instruction booklets. He excused himself and went into the back of the shop. He was gone rather a long time. When he returned with the pamphlet, he handed it to me and said, "Good luck, Herr Manchester," which was extremely interesting, because I hadn't given him my name.

Life started to become complicated. The Krupps didn't know quite where I stood. The great thing going for me was that they had enjoyed a favorable press in America. Moreover, I was known to them as the sympathetic biographer of the Rockefellers and the Kennedys. I, for my part, was buying time while I built up contacts within the Krupp empire and in the family itself. I never revealed that I had read the 14,000-page Nuremberg transcript of the trial at which Alfried was found guilty of being a major Nazi war criminal; however, I had to walk a tightrope. I was obliged to ask awkward



questions, and I was seeing certain people the Krupps would have rather I ignored.

One day I was discovered photographing Essen's prewar synagogue, now used as a showplace for Krupp products. And later that same week they found that I had spent a day interrogating the man who had directed Alfried's 100,000-man slave-labor program.

Shortly thereafter I was picked up by the German police and questioned for three hours. My residence near the family castle was searched every day, and before I'm accused of galloping paranoia, let me explain that once it was searched while I was present. On a Monday morning I arose at three o'clock and was at my desk until early afternoon. Then I decided to take a nap. I was dozing when I heard the rustling of papers. I rose up like the wrath of God and saw a young woman going through my notes. She whirled, excused herself and fled. Her apology was most interesting, because she had spoken in English, and none of the servants spoke anything but German.

If she had been hoping to find legible notes, she was disappointed; early in my career I resorted to code. But code in itself arouses suspicion, so relations between me and my hosts remained strained but uncertain. When I finally left Essen I gave some thought to the route of departure. Reservations were booked through a private travel agency. I took a train to Düsseldorf, flew to Munich — and found when I landed that I was being paged. Answering the airport page, I was told that my hotel reservation had been changed. I went to the new address, and as I entered the room my phone began to ring. I answered it. Krupp was on the other end. His arm was that long.

Before the assassination I had written five long articles about the Krupps for Harry Sions. We were anxious that the Krupps not see them until Slim Aarons, our photographer, had left Essen. Late one afternoon a man called on my New York agent, identified himself as a British literary agent, and presented impeccable credentials. He said he was flying home in the morning; he wanted to borrow a carbon of the articles to read in his hotel room. Well, he was a German. He Xeroxed the articles in his hotel and took them to London, where Count Claus Ahlenfeldt, Krupp's agent there, chartered a plane to Germany. Later, Slim told me that the Count walked in on him, Xeroxes in hand, and Krupp ordered poor Slim—who hadn't read the articles himself — out of the country.

A few months later the Bonn correspondent of the New York *Herald Tribune* came home on sabbatical and told me that Krupp had said to him, "Of course, you realize that Manchester is a Jew." I found it fascinating (a) that he should think it; (b) that he should think it relevant; and (c) that he should be stupid enough to say so. Every time you think the Germans have outwitted you they commit some incredible blunder. For example, it was at a dinner party in the Krupp castle, with Alfried Krupp present, that I was invited to be the house guest of the two members of his family who had been arrested for collaboration in the July 20 attempt on Hitler's life. One consequence was that when I left Germany I carried with me 400 pounds of photocopied documents from the family archives.

What Americans find hard to grasp is that the Krupps have had no parallel whatever in the United States. It is as though General Motors had existed since Plymouth Rock, had always been owned by one man — the head of the family — and was considered by the man on the street to be as patriotic, and as above criticism, as, say, the F.B.I.

The Krupps have also been a family of eccentrics. There was the 19th-century Alfried Krupp, who found the scent of horse manure so stimulating that he designed ventilator shafts to waft the fragrance from the stables through his study. (It was in this atmosphere that the blueprints for Germany's first U-boats were drawn.) At the very end of the bloodline we find Alfried's son Arndt, the product of 12 generations of Ruhr Krupps. Last year Arndt startled the Fatherland by appearing at board meetings wearing a miniskirt, a training bra and green eyeshade. It was this performance which contributed to the fall of the house of Krupp four months ago.

But to me *The Arms of Krupp* is more than a chronicle of unforgettable characters. This remarkable family was manufacturing a thousand cannon a year at the outset of the Thirty Years' War, before the *Mayflower* was built. They were honing bayonets in the Napoleonic era. Krupp arms, in the opinion of both sides, won the Franco-Prussian War. The siege mortar "Big Bertha" was named for Bertha Krupp, a central figure in my story, and it became the most spectacular weapon of World War I. By then the family had become so sophisticated that it had leased its fuse patents to Vickers; between 1914 and 1918 the British owed the Krupps one shilling threepence for every German soldier killed by English artillery fire. And after Versailles this was collected — helping finance Krupp's secret rearmament of Germany.

That rearmament began as early as 1920. It was conducted on clandestine family bases in Holland and Sweden, and by 1926 the Krupps had perfected the tanks which were to overrun France in 1940. Krupp money financed Hitler's election in 1933; Krupp built a munitions plant in Auschwitz, manned by Anschwitz Jews; and Krupp maintained 138 private concentration camps, including one for children. The children who perished were buried under the numbers Krupp had assigned to them.

Most remarkable, Alfried Krupp was considered so vital to the Cold War effort that after the outbreak of the Korean War he was mysteriously pardoned by the U.S. High Commissioner to Germany. He signed a separate peace treaty with Britain, France and America — something Adenauer couldn't do — and within ten years he was the richest and most powerful man in the Common Market.

The Arms of Krupp will not be welcomed in Germany, of course. There the cow is just too sacred. There are signs that a campaign of abuse has already started. My German publisher tells me the family may even attempt to suppress the book.

—WILLIAM MANCHESTER